

SOME FURTHER THOUGHTS ON THE BULL'S-EYE LANTERN

John Barnes

I READ DEAC ROSSELL'S EXPOSITION on the 'Bull's-Eye' lantern in the previous issue of *NMLJ* with great interest, but I disagree entirely with the conclusions he draws.

In 1823, Philip Carpenter (later of Carpenter & Westley fame) published a little book (Fig. 1) to promote his series of 'copper-plate sliders' for use in a new 'improved phantasmagoria lantern' also of his own devising. These two innovations were to completely revolutionise the design of magic lanterns and slides. Carpenter also included in his book an illustration of the 'common magic lantern' that immediately preceded his own design (Fig. 2). Here, in diagrammatic form, he showed a lantern identical to those shown in the six illustrations of Deac Rossell's article.

The fact that Carpenter called his own lantern the 'improved phantasmagoria lantern' would surely indicate that the 'common lantern' it replaced was also a 'phantasmagoria' lantern. What Rossell fails to realise is that his six bull's-eye lanterns are all phantasmagoria lanterns. Now, the phantasmagoria was not introduced into Britain until 1802, so any phantasmagoria lanterns, such as those shown in Rossell's six illustrations, must have been made later than that date.

If there is any doubt that the common bull's-eye lanterns shown in Rossell's examples are indeed phantasmagoria lanterns, we have not only Carpenter's published statement, but also the evidence provided by the lanterns themselves. I will take as an example the lantern shown as No. 5 in Rossell's article. This lantern was acquired by the Barnes brothers more than 50 years ago. With it came a collection of phantasmagoria slides, two of which are shown here (Fig. 3). These slides have the painted images surrounded by a black opaque background, so that the figures stand out on their own when projected, which was one of the delightful characteristics of the phantasmagoria show. There is also a rigid handle at the rear of the lantern, by which it can be held when performing the various effects obtainable by hand-held lanterns and which were such a feature of the phantasmagoria (Fig. 4).

As these pre-Carpenter phantasmagoria lanterns could not possibly predate Philipstahl's introduction of the phantasmagoria to Britain in 1802, I think it is therefore safe to presume that they did not make their appearance on the market until well after the phantasmagoria show had become well established. A more plausible date for the six lanterns under discussion would therefore be c.1810.

In an advertisement in the front of Carpenter's little book are to be found the names of two opticians selling Carpenter's improved lantern. One is Joseph Cox, Optician, of No. 5 Barbican, London, and the other is Messrs Bywater & Co. of Liverpool. It is conceivable that both were previously selling the common bull's-eye lanterns. If illustrations of such lanterns are to be found, they are more likely to turn up in opticians' catalogues of the early nineteenth century, and not in the scientific literature of the previous century. The reason Rossell has not found the illustrations he has been seeking is that he has not only been searching the wrong century, but the wrong country.

Rossell also illustrated two eighteenth-century lanterns with narrow slide stages to accommodate unframed slips of glass, much favoured on the Continent, whereas the six lanterns under discussion have a wide slide stage suitable for holding the typical wood-framed panoramic slides that had been popular in England since Georgian times. This is further reason to suppose the lanterns are of English make and design.

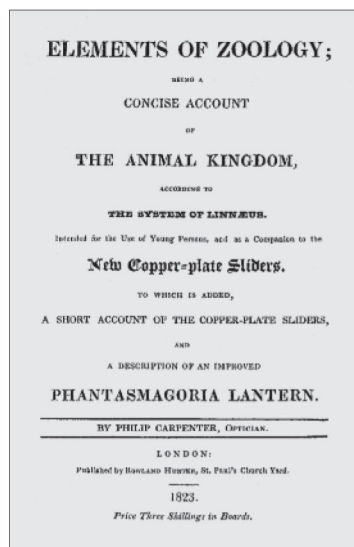
I think there can be little doubt that the bull's-eye lanterns illustrated by Rossell are all of English manufacture, made of Cornish tin and by English tinsmiths. There is no need to look to Nürnberg for their origin. Lanterns have been manufactured in England since the days of Samuel Pepys.

John BARNES is an internationally renowned historian of the cinema and all earlier optical media, and author of the influential five-volume series *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England*. Together with his brother Bill he assembled the Barnes Collection, one of the major foundations of modern interest and scholarship in these areas.

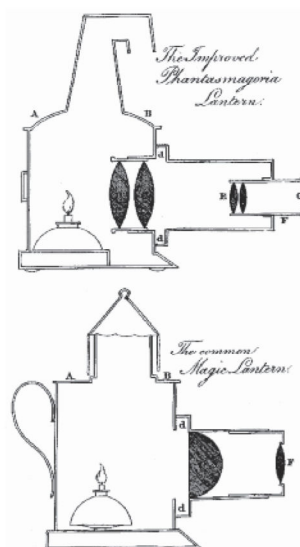
Editor's correction: In Deac Rossell's article in our last issue, Figure 10 should have been credited as follows:

Philip Carpenter, diagram in Elements of Zoology (1823). From an original in the Barnes Collection, reproduced in Laurent Mannoni, Donata Pesenti Campagnoni and David Robinson (eds), Light and Movement: Incunabula of the Motion Picture.

My apologies to all concerned for this editorial oversight.



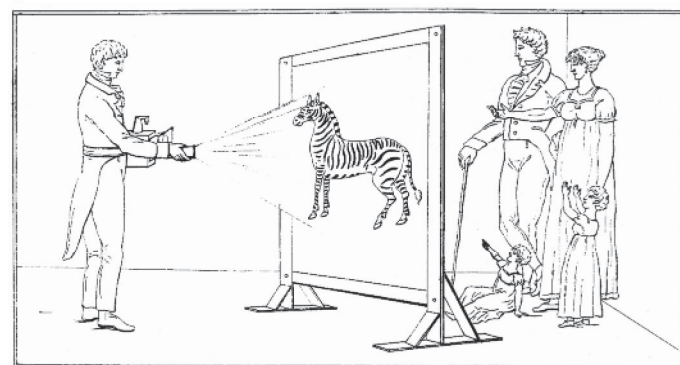
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